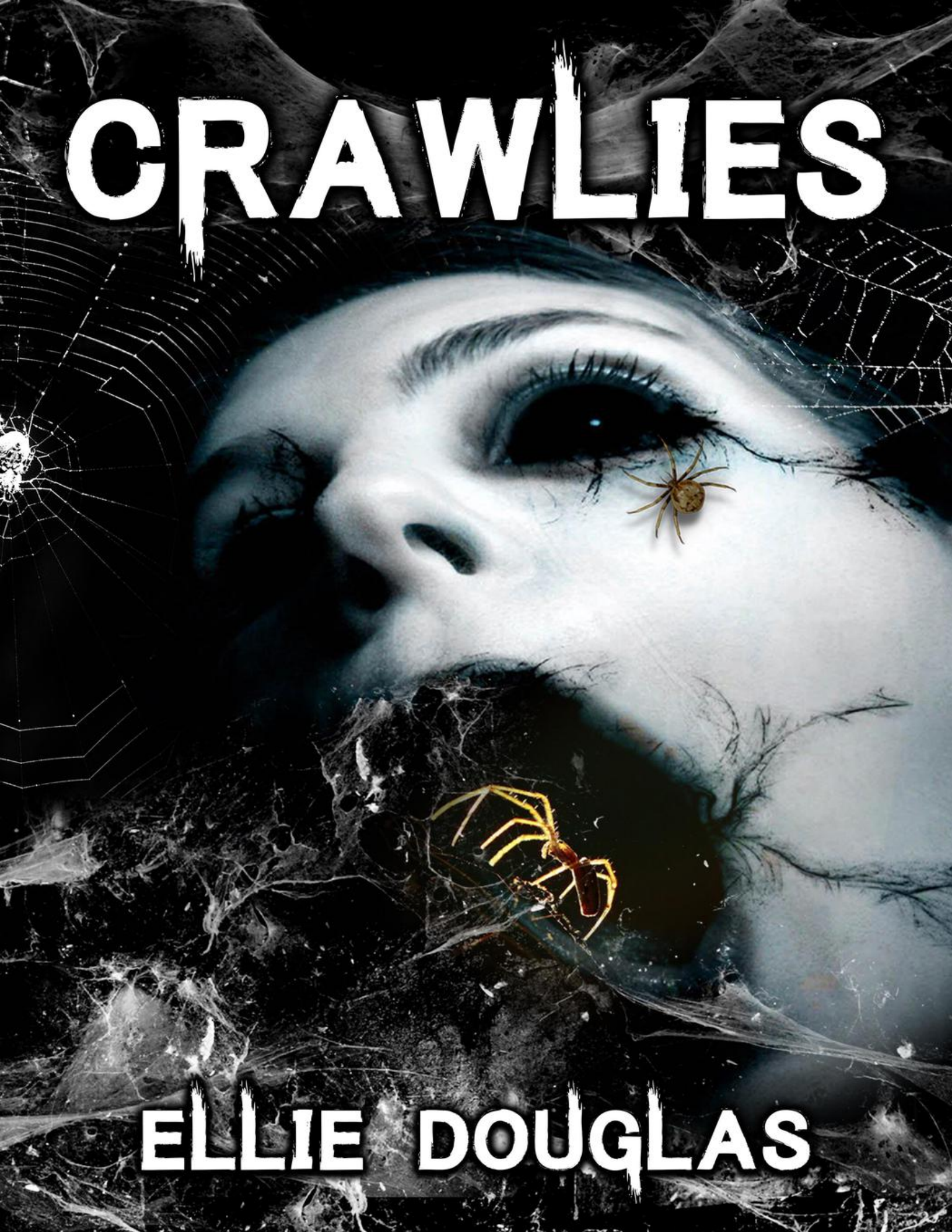
CRAWLIES
ELLIE DOUGLAS

CRAWLIES

by
Ellie Douglas

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BEYOND

Eight spindly legs is what you'll feel, before your skin starts to peel.
Your fear begins to grow, fed by eight-legged critters on the go.
Your features will deform as you writhe, and you'll see you're being watched by a thousand eyes...

I've written your fate and it can't be erased!

I’ve got eight eyes on you!
I’ll fill the core of your being with horrific dread!
Across your eye-line and under your bed!
When you sleep I’ll crawl over your face spinning my web!
Spider terror fills your night!

I’m coming for you tonight!

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

So, there I was minding my own business, waiting for some dinner – when all of a sudden, a powerful blast of poison shot right in my direction. I of course ducked and got out of there quickly, but my brother wasn't fast enough. I remember looking back and watching the stuff cover his entire body. A thick white coating drenched him.

I could hear his screams. I could see his legs curling forward as he tucked himself into a tight ball. It didn't protect him. I wanted to go back and pull him out of the way, but I knew if I did, I'd be caught in it and die, too. The poison penetrated his body so deeply that it was only a matter of seconds before he fell to the ground, still curled up tightly. There he lay dead, but that wasn't enough. No, the bastard that killed him had to make it personal. I watched in horror as he stomped on my brother repeatedly. Disgusted and frustrated, I headed back home feeling defeated – and furious.

It was time to take back what's rightfully ours, our lives. The right to live! There was no need for all the violence laid upon us. We really pose no threat to anyone, and we eat bugs, which should please the ungrateful humans. This is what I led with when I held a meeting with all my brothers and sisters. For the most part they agreed, but they also held so much fear.

"We aren't warriors!" was said by hundreds.

"We can't fight the giants!" said others.

I took it upon myself to prove to them that we'd be okay. What would it matter if some of us died in the war against them? After all, they already kill us now. In hindsight, it probably wasn't a good thing to have said. But it was too late. I had already said what needed to be heard, and it was time we stood our ground.

For three months, I repeated the same speech to all my brothers and sisters. Each time I pulled more over to my side. Many more were happy to go to battle, and by the fifth month I had twenty-eight hundred willing to fight. Though it wasn't really going to be a fight. No, instead it was going to be us taking back our right to live.

We, well most of us, didn't have poisonous venom. All we had was our wits, and something even better than that. We could travel unseen. We could hide in the smallest of holes, in cracks, and under clothing, curtains, and

drapes – which would serve us very well. We're small, really small, and unless we're hunting, we're invisible to the two-legged giants. That would be our saving grace. Being able to stealthily move about without being seen was the appeal that got more of my brothers and sisters on my side than anything else I had said.

In the sixth month, I started to make plans. There were thirty-four hundred of us by the time we got started. I went through the list I'd prepared, making sure that everyone understood their roles. I set up the headquarters in the basement of where I lived. The place was occupied by a family of four – a mother, a father, and two young children.

I knew my brothers and sisters could hide inside the children's school bags and then travel to their school, where they could crawl into another child's bag and be taken back to that kid's home. When our new brothers and sisters were born, and before they ballooned off in flight, I recruited them into our cause.

We were set. We had the numbers, and it excited me. For once, we were going to show those pesky humans that we spiders have a right to live! Each group was given instructions to leave the children alone, as they were to be used solely as our means of travel. We were to only torment the adults.

DAY 1

I was eager to get started. When the family dog made his appearance, I spun a web from the doorframe and gracefully landed on the top of the dog's head. Its long fur felt coarse against my legs. I quickly moved to his collar, crawled underneath it, and waited for him to take me upstairs. I knew it was late in the evening, because the sky had turned black and the children were already in bed asleep. It was the perfect time.

When I was upstairs, I waited for the dog to go to sleep. Then I crept off of him and made my way to the adults' bedroom. I crawled behind a post of the bed frame at the headboard. It was a large bed that the humans referred to as their iron four-poster.

I'd seen them do some weird stuff in that bed. The man would tie the woman's arms to the spindles in the headboard and her feet to those in the footboard. One time a few months back, I'd had to crawl into a hole in the ceiling, and even that didn't prevent me from hearing what came from their mouths. The moans... Those moans will torment me forever. My whole body shuddered at the memory.

I waited for them to fall asleep. I gave it two more hours to make sure that they were in a deep sleep. Not that my body would have woken them, I was just being overly cautious. I crawled around to the front of the iron frame and propelled down, securing myself with a web. When I landed on the man's forehead, I dislodged myself from my web.

I scurried over his shut eyelids with disgust. Then I scuttered down his face, across his mouth, and down his chest. It was hairy and felt like I was traversing a forest. He wore no clothing, making my trip down his body awful. Having to crawl along his very hairy body was, I swear, like hiking through a prickly bush at times. I got to his thigh and paused when he shifted. I was worried he'd turn over and squash me, and I was ready to jump. But thankfully, he didn't turn. He just groaned in his sleep and then settled again.

I moved down his legs until I was at his feet. The way he was lying was perfect, as both of his legs were together. I knew what I had in mind, and I got straight to work. I anchored my web to his left ankle and worked at spinning my thread across to his right ankle, underneath it, and back over to the left one, until I'd spun a thousand times around his ankles.

I was satisfied and gave myself a break. Then I worked on the woman. Her feet were much smaller and had no hair, which was a relief. The man's feet were covered in hair and I was feeling itchy after having bound them. I worked my thread around the woman's feet, securing them tightly together. When I finished, I looked back on my work and I was proud, very proud. Then I crawled up the woman's body. As I got closer to the headboard, I noticed that her hand was close to one of the iron spindles.

I made my way to the headboard and started spinning a web between the spindle and her hand. I kept going until there was no visible skin showing on her hand. I knew there was no way she'd be able to pull that off.

I perched myself on the top rail of the headboard and looked down at the humans. If I could spit, I would have spat on them. I went up the wall, spun another smaller web, and caught a moth. It satisfied my hunger, for now. Then I stayed on the ceiling waiting for morning to arrive.

When it did, I found myself wishing I had a voice, one that those bastard humans could hear. I would have been cheering and clapping as loudly as possible, taunting them more. For now, though, I could only watch in pure glee. The satisfaction I got when the two of them started to rise made my year.

First the man sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed, oblivious of his tied feet. He rubbed at his eyes for a lot longer than I could stand. The anticipation of him trying to get up and walk was almost too much for me. I leaned forward, swinging gently on a thread I'd attached to the ceiling. I was close enough to see them, but far enough for them to not see me.

The man suddenly let out a loud cry. "What the hell!" he shouted, stirring the woman awake. When she tried to move, she looked up to see her right hand tied to the headboard.

"Hon, why did you tie me up? It's too early for a nookie. We'll play after I get the kids off to school. Untie me, babe."

"What are you talking about? I thought you tied me up!" he screeched, looking down at his feet. "What is that stuff?" he grumbled as he moved his hands down his legs, grabbing at the web.

"Come on, Tony. I know you did this. Stop with the horny crap and untie me."

“Listen to me carefully, Megan. I promise you I did not tie you up. I didn’t tie myself up, either!”

Megan looked more closely at her tied hand and then let out a bloodcurdling scream.

“Megan, stop screaming! You’ll scare the kids.”

“Me? You started it, you screamed first. Which, I might add, I thought you were role-playing like we usually do. But this, this is fucked up. Why is my hand tied to the frame with what looks like fucking spiderwebs? And why the hell are my feet tied, too? This is disgusting, Tony. Ew, so fucking gross!” She wiggled her body angrily against the sheets, trying to free herself while squirming at the thought of spiders on her body.

“How the hell would I know? I’m not playing role games with you, Megan. My fucking legs are tied with the same shit. I can’t even break free of it!” Tony slid off the bed, and in doing so fell to his knees. He rolled over and crawled his way to a dresser. When he got to it, he rolled onto his back and sat upright, his legs stretched out in front of him like a Ken doll. Then he extended a hand to the top drawer, but couldn’t reach it.

“What are you doing?” Megan called out.

“I’m trying to get the scissors, but I can’t reach them.”

Just as he made a second attempt one of their children entered the room. The little girl looked baffled at her father on the floor.

“Daddy, what are you doing?”

“Doreen, please be a good girl and hand Daddy the scissors.”

“Where are they?” she asked as her little eyes went from her mother tied to the bed to her father naked on the floor.

“In the top drawer,” Tony said in one breath. He looked up and watched his daughter open the drawer and dig around for the scissors.

“I found them,” she proudly squealed and handed them to Tony.

“Be a good girl and get your brother up. Mummy and I will be right there.”

Doreen giggled as she left the room. She was used to seeing her parents in the nude, but she’d never seen her mother tied up before, nor her father on the floor. She continued to giggle as she went into her brother’s room to wake him.

Tony used the scissors and cut his feet free. Then he stood up. Before cutting Megan loose, he searched the room. He looked hard at the ceiling, in the corners, across the skirting above the drapes, down the walls, and on

the tops of the bedroom furniture. He then got on his knees and looked under the bed. He let out a deep throaty grumble when he couldn't find anything.

Agitated, he stood up and made his way to an eager Megan. As she was cut free, she fleetingly thought of snatching the scissors from his hand and stabbing him in the eye with them. She was furious that he'd ignored her for as long as he had, while he was searching around the room.

"Next time cut me loose first, and then search the damn room," she snapped while pulling on a bathrobe.

"Next time? Tell me, Megan, are you expecting this to happen again?"

"God, you are so dense sometimes. I was speaking figuratively. Of course I don't expect it to happen again. It better not happen again! I'm taking a shower to clean off this crap. Just so you know, Tony, I won't sleep easy tonight if there are spiders in here."

Tony got in her way, and she turned her back to him with a huffing noise escaping her pursed lips. He hated speaking to her back, but he didn't have a choice.

"That makes two of us. I'll spray an entire can of spider killer in here, that should keep the bastard things out." He reached his hand up and placed it across her shoulder. With a gentle squeeze, he added, "Don't be mad at me, hon, it isn't like I did this!" He could feel her tension lift. "You know, this would be a good story to tell your friends," he said before leaning down and giving the top of her head a kiss.

She lightly shrugged off his hand. "You know how I feel about spiders. I can't believe we were both tied up like that! It's unheard of, and it not only angers me but also scares me. Please make sure you spray the hell out of this room." She walked to the bathroom. Turning before opening the door, she smiled at Tony and then went in.

He could hear the shower being turned on. He wrapped his robe around his body, left the bedroom with a shiver, and headed downstairs.

I knew humans were an angry bunch, but seeing how mad they were still annoyed me. After all, they were the ones that started this. They and their kind have been killing my species for years.

When I heard that the room would be dusted with that awful white spray, I knew I'd have to wait two days before I could re-enter the room. I was vexed at that, but also happy that I'd achieved the unthinkable.

I was feeling mighty pleased with myself. The aftermath wasn't as impactful as I'd hoped, but I knew that in two days' time it would be even better. I would be sitting, hiding behind the bed frame, waiting for them to fall asleep. When they did, I would do something even more sinister to them. The thoughts I had raced through me like a tornado.

I stayed hidden in a tiny hole on the ceiling. When the woman finished her shower and left the room, I was able to make my way to the basement.

DAY 3

I had waited long enough. It was time, I told myself. Making my way to the adults' bedroom, I stopped myself at the threshold. I couldn't smell anything, nor see any white residue of any kind. The window frames were clear and they'd left the windows open, which had helped empty the room of the spray they'd used.

I'd been thinking for the past day and night of how I would do things, and this time I wanted to make more of an impact. I wanted to honor my brother and all the others that had fallen in the years we've been sharing space with these humans.

I carefully made my way to the bedframe and hid behind one of the iron posts again. A few hours went by, and there was no sign of the adults. I was getting frustrated and angry, and was about ready to call it a night when they finally showed up.

Something wasn't right about the way they were acting. The man kept tripping over his own feet. Then he removed one shoe and fell forward, his body hitting the floor while he tried to take off the other one.

The woman was laughing like a witch at him. Then she suddenly rushed to the bathroom, and I heard something wet and splashy hit the porcelain bowl. It was the oddest of sounds. It stunk as well. I could smell it from where I hid.

She came out of the bathroom with an unsteady sway to her gait. Her face looked whiter, and as she made her way to the bed she acted like she'd been tranquilized.

She stumbled over invisible objects, and when she felt the edge of the mattress she threw her body face down onto the bed – fully clothed and still wearing her shoes, which annoyed me. How was I going to tie her feet with those pointy things on them? Luckily for me, the husband, who was equally swaying like some ghostly animated shape, fumbled his way to the bed and took off her shoes.

Then he pushed her over to the middle of the bed and dragged her toward the headboard. The two of them were giggling like school children on a playground. When he'd gotten her all the way up, he rolled over her and lay down next to her. His laugh was loud and obnoxious.

I could only sit and wait for them to go to sleep. It took a lot less time than I'd thought it would, and they both seemed to fall into some kind of very deep sleep. I know this because they both started to snore loudly, though they were out of sync with each other. That made their snoring louder, and it vibrated the room like a train in the distance. That awful snoring sound seemed to get closer, then further away, and then closer again. The hairs on my legs started to feel paralyzed from all the noise in the room. It was horrible, and the smell coming from them assaulted my senses in an unpleasant way.

I'd never smelled anything like that before, and I couldn't figure out what it was. Even their dog didn't like it. He entered the room and then left quickly.

I'd just gotten myself over to her pillow when the woman unexpectedly bolted upright. She grabbed at her tummy and swung her legs over the side of the bed. Pressing tightly on her abdomen as if she were securing it to herself, she blurted out, "Tony, my stomach feels like an inflated balloon. Oh God, here it comes again!" She rushed off the bed and vanished into the bathroom, leaving the door wide open.

All I could hear was her gagging, and then the loud splatter that forced its way up and out. It reminded me of something I'd seen on the black box in their living room that shows moving images. It was a waterfall, I remember the man saying. My mind tried to go to that image, but it was stopped sharply when the woman made horrific retching noises, followed by more wet splashes. It was vile. The hairs over my entire body stiffened, and I felt like I was being stabbed with daggers.

I could feel my whole body tense up. I shifted off the pillow and hid underneath it. She returned and fell onto the bed, and then ten minutes later she was racing for the bathroom again. The man was laughing at her. All I wanted was for them both to go to sleep, and to stay asleep. I had no choice but to be patient. I stayed hidden on the underside of the pillow.

Sometime later, they both were asleep again. Before I got started, I waited to see if the woman would get up. She didn't. I then looked at my options. I figured that sunrise would be at least four hours away, so I dug in.

I crawled to the man's face and walked across his closed eyelids. Stopping at his left eye, I used his eyelashes as fixtures for my web. I spun like crazy until that eye was sealed shut from corner to corner with a web as

thick and tall as his eyebrow. Content with my work, I then went to his right eye and sewed that one shut, too.

When I looked at the window, I knew I had little time left. I decided to shut the woman's eyes in the same way. Carefully, I made my way over to her face and started on her right eye. When I'd done that one, I went to her left eye. I noticed that she had much shorter lashes than the man, which made my job a little more difficult. But I persevered and got it done.

I wasn't finished with them. I had so much more that I needed to do to them, but there wasn't time. I'd have to return later to do the rest of what I'd planned. I scuttled up and hid behind the iron frame. Sometime after the sun rose, the little boy wandered into the room.

He stood there in his dark blue pyjamas and rubbed at his eyes, pulling crusty sleep from the corners and yawning at the same time. Then he stopped rubbing at his eyes and stood at the foot of the bed. "Mommy, Daddy, I'm hungry," he said. When he got no response, he walked around to his father's side and tugged on his arm. "Daddy, wake up." He pulled harder and harder until the man spoke, startling the little boy. "Quiet, son. I'll get up in a minute. It's still dark out."

"Daddy, it's not dark."

"Yes, it is. Go back to bed, and let me sleep for a bit longer." Suddenly the man's clock alarm started to beep.

"Daddy, see? Look, even the clock is telling you. Please, Daddy, I'm hungry."

"Okay, son, give me a minute." He rolled over and slapped the alarm off, using the palm of his hand. He turned a little and listened to his son leave the room. He didn't want to panic the boy when he realized he couldn't open his eyes. He lay there for a minute trying to recall the night before. Then he tried to open his eyes again, and couldn't.

"Hon, how much did we drink? I think I got conjunctivitis or something. I can't open my damn eyes," he said as he slid off the bed. Unsteadily, he extended his arms and tried find the bathroom, feeling along the wall as he tentatively put one foot slowly in front of the other. He didn't want to trip on the mess of clothing that he knew was somewhere in the room.

When he was in the bathroom, I could hear water running and him complaining, and then he did what I'd been waiting to hear. He screamed.

When his hands touched what I'd created across his eyes, he let out a throaty squeal followed by an angry growl and another scream.

I poked my head out, but I couldn't see him. But I could imagine him doing that, and I certainly could hear him. My heart was pumping, and my legs grew a little bit unstable. I wanted to jump from my iron post to the next spindle in pure delight! The man was freaking out, and I was having a fit of glee that had spread all through me. Revenge sure did feel great!

Several minutes later, the man came out of the bathroom. I stayed still as a corpse, admiring my work. It was evident that he'd splashed water across his face to dislodge my creation, but clearly that hadn't worked for him.

I laughed as I looked at my artwork, with pearl-like water droplets hanging on the thin spider silk just like the morning dew on blades of grass. It was priceless! I kept my eight eyes on him, watching him fumble and grope across the wall with his hands until he made it back to the bed.

The woman was still asleep and unresponsive to his yelling. The little girl heard him and came running, only to be shouted at to get out. She ran back out, and I could hear her sobbing in another room.

Tony was furious. He slapped at the bed, feeling for Megan.

"Wake up. Wake up!" A few tugs on the sheets, along with his loud voice, finally woke her.

"What is it?"

"Look at me, Megan. Just look at me! Why can't I open my eyes? What the hell is stopping me? Do I have conjunctivitis or something else?" he frantically asked. Then he added, "It feels like soft bandages, but kind of stringy and sticky. What is it?" he pleaded.

Megan rolled over onto her back and stretched her arms above her head. Then while she held onto the headboard, she stretched her legs and pointed her toes. I could hear her backbone clicking and it sounded like a storm of thunder rolls. She reached up to her own eyes and rubbed at them, but her hand quickly pulled away when she felt my webbing. Unsure of what it was, she tentatively brought back her hand and used her fingers to dab at my web.

"Um, Tony, whatever you have, I have it, too. I can't open my eyes!"

"Can you pull it off?" he asked while pulling at the thick cobwebs covering his own eyes.

“No. Please, Tony, what the fuck is it? It feels like cotton wool, kind of sticky and like thousands of cotton strands. It’s so tightly fixed to my eyes, I can’t pull it off.” She yelled, and then in a screech she said, “It’s the spiders again, isn’t it? Get them off of me!” She sat up on her knees and shook her body forcefully, then started slapping at her thighs, stomach, arms, and face. “Get them off!” she howled.

“All right, whatever it is, we both have it. We both must remain calm, or one of us might have a heart attack,” Tony said in an attempt to calm her down, even though he felt incapable of calming himself.

A strong and disturbing feeling overwhelmed him. He tried not to fret over it, but he couldn’t stop thinking of how they’d both been climbed over by spiders. He feared for his ears and mouth, and he could feel his heart beating harder against his chest. His ribs pulled tighter with each breath he took.

Behind the webbing covering his eyes, all he could see was total blackness. He wondered if he’d be blind forever. Every thought he had was crippling him. He’d have to stop himself before he became catatonic. He breathed in and out several times, and his rational mind kicked in. His entire back shivered, and he could feel pricks of gooseflesh stab at his arms, legs, and behind his neck.

“Stop. Just fucking stop!” he voiced aggressively.

“You always do this, Tony. You panic, and then when I do, you try to act cool and tough. But guess what? You aren’t.”

“Megan, I’m not telling you to stop, I’m telling myself. The thoughts swarming me right now are overwhelming me. I don’t want to fight with you, babe, I just want the both of us to get out of this. And then so help me God, I will kill every fucking spider I see!”

“Really? Are you sure you weren’t telling me to stop? ’Cause I have to tell you, I can’t stop. Those eight-legged freaks have invaded my body... Oh God, what if they’re inside our ears?” she said, quickly shaking her head from side to side as if she were trying to empty water from a deep dive.

“Yeah, I thought about that as well. That’s why my brain is on fucking fire. It won’t shut up, and it’s giving me scenarios that are making me panic more. Look, we both have to remain as calm as possible and get this shit off our faces. I’m going back to the bathroom. I’ll try to wash it off again. I splashed water on it before and it didn’t help, but maybe if I soap it up it’ll come free. I’ll let you know.”

“Okay, just please hurry. I’m sure they’re still crawling all over me. My skin feels tingly and itchy, and I just want to be sure. Please hurry!”

I watched the man walk into the bathroom, then waited with my eyes fixed on the woman. She had sat on the corner of the bed and was pulling at the webs across her eyes. Each time a little strand of it came free, she tried to shake it off her hand, for it to only stick to her fingers. I was happy that I’d decided to use the sticky threads on their eyes. It made for such a great show!

“Is it working?” she called out to the man.

When the man didn’t reply, she yelled louder until he replied.

“It is working, but slowly. I have my right eye mostly clear, but damn it, the soap’s in my fucking eye now. It really stings.”

As if the day couldn’t get any better, hearing him in tears over the irritation from the soap was the icing on the cake. I couldn’t stop smiling.

The woman was now standing. She felt her way to a dresser, where she sat in front of a mirror. She was trying to free the cobwebs from her eyes. Her reflection in the mirror made me laugh. Her arms were flinging up and down, trying to shake the threads from her fingers. It made her look like she was a bird flapping its wings after it had become stuck in an oil spill.

I turned to see the man come out of the bathroom. His eyes were free of my webs, much to my disappointment. I couldn’t help but still grin from ear to ear, though. As he got closer, I could see the bright red rings around his eyes, and underneath them and across the lids.

“I did it, Megan. Now it’s your turn.” He took the woman’s hand and led her to the bathroom. “Don’t open them until I tell you,” he said before turning the water on.

“Whatever you’re going to do, just do it!” she snapped.

I couldn’t see them, but I could imagine he was using soap to wash my webs away. I raised my shoulders, and then scurried up the wall and across to the frame of the bedroom door. I tucked myself up into the top corner of it and waited. A few minutes later, they both came out with their eyes looking red-rimmed and sore. I started to grin wider until I heard what he said.

“I’m tired of this. I can’t explain why spiders are doing this to us. It’s like we’re a target and purposefully being attacked. I’m going to call the fumigators. It’s time to get rid of these critters once and for all.”

“Good, because no one believed me when I told them we’d woken the day before with webs tying our feet together. They all thought I’d gone crazy.”

“Probably a good idea to not tell anyone about this. No one’s going to believe us.”

“What will you tell the fumigators?” Megan asked while she inspected her puffy eyes in the mirror.

“I’ll just tell them we’ve got a spider infestation. They don’t need any more details than that,” he said while putting a robe on and taking his phone from the bedside cabinet. He thumbed through it and found two exterminators.

I watched as he made the calls, and though I couldn’t hear the other person, I could hear the man. When he’d finished with the first one, he made a call to the other one. He hung up from that one, went back to the first one he’d called, and booked them. They’d arrive five days from now.

I wanted to jump up and down, elated that I had more time on my hands. I crawled into the hole in the doorframe and stayed out of sight. When they left the room and I was sure they weren’t coming back, I made my way to the basement.

Most of my brothers and sisters hadn’t returned yet, and probably wouldn’t for some time. I couldn’t do anything about them, but I had to let the rest of them know what was happening.

After I instructed them to relocate to the house next door, I felt good that I’d done the right thing. Every one of them made the move that day. There’d be no way we could get word to my other brothers and sisters that had yet to make the journey back. All I could do was hope they wouldn’t return until the house had been cleared of the pesticides.

I stayed behind to get one more night in. The need I had to avenge my fellows was still burning inside me. Tonight I’d give those two-legged humans something truly horrific to remember.

DAY 4

Looking up from the basement, I couldn't see much light coming from under the door at the top of the stairs. I quickly figured out why as I crawled under the door and right into the side of the dog. The family's mutt had decided it would be a good place for him to sprawl out his enormous body, right outside the door. Luckily for me, I was small enough to walk past him. Though I did consider for just a moment hitching a ride on him. I quickly changed my mind, though. Not knowing where he might go meant I could have ended up anywhere.

Instead, I scurried up the wall and across the ceiling until I was back in the adults' bedroom. I knew I had several hours to burn before they'd be retiring for the night. I could only hope that they didn't show up wobbly and incoherent like they had last night. I took my time, going from wall to wall and checking out places to hide where I hadn't been before.

The mirror was a good one. I slipped my body between the glass frame and the backing board. No one would ever find me here. I stumbled upon a dead fly in there, so of course I ate that. Feeling full, I crawled back out of there and webbed my way to the floor. I scuttered across the thick carpet until I was at the base of the bed, and then I went under the bed. Another dead insect was near the middle, so I ate that, too.

I crawled up one of the bed legs and onto the sheets. I then went across the room to the wall and back down it, and landed nicely atop the tall dresser. This would be the best hiding place. Behind one of the ornaments on the dresser, there was a tiny hole that I slipped into. Then I crawled back out and sat on top of it. Roosting there like a sleeping bat, I looked out over the room.

To cope with the boredom from waiting, I started to count all of the places where I could hide.

1: Any pocket of their clothing, which I might add was strewn haphazardly across the floor in heaps.

2: Inside the hems of the drapes.

3: Inside the curtain rods.

4: Inside the ceiling extractor fan.

5: Inside the many shoes that littered the carpeted floor.

6: Behind the bed legs.

7: On top of the lightshade.

8: Inside any of the drawers, as I could easily slip in and out of them.

I kept going and ended up with sixty-eight places to hide in, in just that one room. I'd been so busy counting and searching the room for new hiding places that a lot of time had passed. I noticed the darkness from outside had turned the room black. I told myself it wouldn't be much longer now. I was right. I soon heard footsteps, and sure enough the door swung wide. The woman was the first to enter.

Before they had a chance to see me, I webbed down to the floor and crawled fast from the side of the room I was on to the middle where their bed was. I had to dodge her feet as she walked across the bedroom. I almost shat myself from fear of being stomped on. I made it to the bed and used the dangling sheets to haul my body to the top.

I took a quick look and saw she had her back to the bed. The man was standing in the doorway. Using this chance, I crawled over the sheets and got behind the iron headboard and waited.

After my heart had settled back down and I knew I was safe, I was actually glad to see them. Inside me, my stomach flipped in excitement. I was ready, but I had to wait for them to go to sleep. At least they weren't acting strange this time. I listened to them talk.

"Babe, I'm terrified to go to sleep in here," the woman said. "Maybe we should sleep in the living room?"

"You know that's not possible. You can't sleep in the chair, nor on the couch. You've tried it before, and because of your sciatica you were a cripple for days afterwards. I think it'll be all right. Even if the bastards cobweb us, they can't kill us."

"Well I guess that's true. Though I can't stop shaking that feeling. You know, where it feels like I have spiders crawling all over my arms and legs. The thought of them on my face makes me want to puke."

"The scariest thing for me, Megan, is we haven't even seen the damn things. I have no idea how many of them there are, let alone where the fuckers are hiding out!"

"Come to think of it, that's true. But last week, I saw one – I think it was the one you killed in the kitchen, remember?"

"Yes, actually I do. A small black hairy thing, about as big as a quarter. I got him good. I'll do it again if I see them, I promise you that."

“Good, because all I can think about is, while we’re sleeping, they’ll crawl up my arms and start to surge across my face. What if they try to get into my mouth, or yours? I won’t be able to contain my panic. What if we go to bed with something covering our faces?”

“Like what?”

“Remember when we were on the plane to the UK and the flight attendant gave us a gift package? Inside of that there were some sleep masks, remember?”

“I do remember that, yes.”

“Well, we could use those, right? Do you know where they are?” Megan frantically started opening and closing the dresser drawers.

“Babe, stop. You threw them out, hon. I recall you said that they were something you’d never use, so you tossed them out. It was a good idea, though,” he said as he gently stroked her back. He could feel her tenseness and it worried him.

“What about a hoodie?”

“That’s another great idea, except they’re packed in the crawl space under the house with the rest of our winter clothing. It would take all night just to dig that stuff out and unpack it all.”

“God damn it! I don’t feel safe in here, I really don’t,” she said as she moved to the bed and sat on the corner. Her hands covered her face as she leaned into her drawn up knees.

“Babe, if it makes you feel better, I’ll stand guard. It’s Friday night, so I have no work tomorrow. I can watch over you, and then in the morning you can let me sleep all day.”

“You’d do that for me?” She looked up and directly at him, her eyes glossed over with a sheen of wetness.

“I would, yes. There’s absolutely no point in either of us squabbling over this. We got this. I’ll do that, and you can have a good night’s sleep.” He moved closer to her with a reassuring smile.

“The past few nights, you and I have been at each other’s throats because of these damn things. And here you are, being as sweet as cherry pie. I do love you.”

“I know you do. That’s why I’m doing this, because I love you, too,” he said while undressing. He dropped his clothing to the floor and got into bed. His left hand tapped at the bedsheet as he looked at her. She stood up and

removed her clothing, letting it also fall to the floor. Then she got in and snuggled behind him.

"Don't fall asleep! Promise me, Tony."

"I promise. Now get some sleep, hon. We didn't get much last night. We were so drunk, and you spent most of it puking your heart out. Then we had...Well, we both know what happened after that. Let's not think about it. You shut your eyes, and I'll be here wide awake."

"How?"

"How what?"

"How will you stay awake?"

"I'll leave the bedside lamp on, and I have my phone. I'll watch something, read stuff, do whatever it takes. Don't you worry."

Megan wanted to say more, but tiredness had taken over. She gave out a small yawn, pressed her face closer into his back, and closed her eyes. She fell asleep within five minutes.

Tony thumbed through his phone for an hour and a half, and then he looked around the room for something to keep him awake. His eyes were feeling heavier with each passing minute. Unable to focus on his phone anymore, he stopped and stared at the wall and the ceiling, and wondered to himself where the spiders were.

His mind started to play tricks on him. He thought he saw part of the ceiling opening up and growing darker. He stared intently at it, fixating on it until his eyes leaked and stung. He rubbed at them and looked up and saw nothing, and his lids closed once more.

He forced them open seconds later and thought he saw a magnified image of a spider staring at him with all of its eight eyes visible. They looked like blackened pinheads, and he watched as its mandible clicked open and shut. A shiver ran down his spine and he felt a chill envelope him. He shook his head and closed his eyes tightly. "Not real," he muttered. "*Not real. Not real.* "

When he opened his eyes the image was gone. He unwillingly closed his eyes and again opened them seconds later. With the dim yellow light from the lamp illuminating the room, he thought he saw a sort of amber sheen over the exoskeleton of an oversized spider with all eight giant legs coming at him fast. He flung his arms into the air and his phone dropped to the floor. Then he shook his head and the image was gone.

Tony rolled over enough to see that Megan was sound asleep. Then he rolled back and let her fall naturally into the curve of his back. With her body warming his, he felt sleepier. He put one arm under his cheek and the other down at his side, his orbs focused on a corner of the ceiling. He half-expected a group of spiders to swarm out. When they didn't, his eyelids closed by themselves.

He snapped them open again, his heart racing. When he didn't see anything, he closed them again. Tony shifted a little more and looked directly at the lamp. Within seconds his eyes grew fuzzy and his focus turned black, and he shut his eyes without realizing it. Unable to stop himself, he fell into a deep sleep.

I was finally able to make a start on my plans. I thought he'd never fall asleep! Eager to get going, I crept out from behind the iron frame and headed for the woman's face. I sat there with my legs spread out. My back legs were touching her eyebrows, and they tickled a little. I was in deep thought, figuring out what I'd do first.

My eyes followed the contours of the woman's face, and then I knew what I should do. She had most of her left side squished against the man's back, so it would make my job a little more difficult... But not impossible, just harder.

I went to work on her right eye, carefully spinning my sticky threads across the lid, over the top lashes, and fastening them to the bottom lashes. When I finished, I stood back and admired my work. Proud of my artful creation, I crawled to her exposed ear. I changed my thread to the non-sticky kind and filled her ear hole until my web spilled out the sides. Then for added fun I secured my web to the top of her ear and back down to the bottom of her lobe. I repeated that until I couldn't see any flesh on her ear.

I was more than proud, I was elated – no, astounded by my own creation. I decided it was a good time to take a break. Just as I was moving away from her ear, I heard a buzzing sound. All of my eyes watched as a moth got tangled up in the web I'd just built. I crawled over and feasted on the moth. I felt so energized afterward that I went right back to work.

I squeezed between the gap of her cheek bone and the man's back, and turned my body around so I was facing up toward her eye. I wasn't sure how I'd manage spinning my thread in such a tight space, but I was determined. I inched myself up just a little more and used her cheek bone to secure myself. I then shot a web out. It missed the mark, falling short of her

eye lashes and hitting the bridge of her nose. There was no breeze, so it just fell.

I spun another and aimed a little more to the right. This time it caught on her top eyelashes, and that was all I needed. I tight-roped myself across my web and thought I'd get squashed between that eye and the man's back. I managed to spin enough web back and forth, from the top of her lashes to the bottom, until she looked as though a large white blob was covering her closed eyelid.

I kept going, walking back and forth from top to bottom until I'd layered it thick enough for it to not come free. No amount of soap would wash that off.

I chuckled to myself as I pushed myself into the tiny gap between her face and his back to get to her other ear. But I couldn't. Much to my disappointment, her ear was pressed firmly onto both his body and the bed.

I wriggled my way out of that tiny space and headed back over her face. Looking at her, I knew what I could do next. I walked to the middle of her nose and then down until I was on her upper lip. I turned around and looked up inside of both her nostrils.

I could see coarse hair that would be perfect for my web to adhere to. I stuck my two front legs inside and moved them around, pushing the nose hairs to the sides a little more.

It was like a thistle bush that felt very prickly on my legs. It wasn't a good feeling, and to make matters worse my legs brushed against something hardened and crusty. When I pulled my legs out and stuck my small head inside to look, I could see she had some snot tucked deep into the side of her left nostril. Bits of nose hair were sticking out of it like thorns, which made me feel unsafe.

I pulled my head out from her nostril and started spinning my web, filling that hole as fast as I could. I kept going until there were no spaces between her nostril and skin. It was a tight fit and I doubted that an ant could have squeezed through. I then switched sides and filled her right nostril. Thankfully, that side of her nose hadn't been blocked by the man's back.

When I'd finished with her nose, I looked at her mouth and knew exactly what I would do next. With her nose filled, she started to breath with her mouth open, which was exciting to me in a way I couldn't fathom. But first things first. It was time to bind up the man's eyes, nose, and ears.

Then for my grand finale, I'd do their mouths. My eagerness was overpowering me, and I knew I had to slow down for my own health. I took a break, ate a bug, and then casually crawled through the man's hair and onto his face.

Creeping across his forehead to his left eye, I sat looking over his face briefly. I then moved down and got under his closed lid, settling on the diamond-shaped bone below and lateral to the eye's orbit. I maneuvered around, turning to face his eye from underneath it.

My glands worked harder than they've ever worked, transforming my liquid silk into solid threads. I spun my web and sprayed his eye with it, latching onto his top lashes and then fasten that to the bottom ones. His eyes were tightly closed, shortening the gap between the top and bottom lashes, which made my job a lot easier. And faster, too.

I almost jumped off of his face when his eye started to twitch. I paused for a moment, ready to scurry out of there and back into hiding. But he didn't wake or try opening his eyes, so I carried on. When I finished with that eye, I didn't hesitate and made a start on his other eyelid. When I'd finished with that one, I crawled to his nose, raised my body up a little, and scrutinized my work.

Intoxicated, was how I was feeling! Both of his shut lids looked as though they were covered in layers and layers of white frosting. I was ecstatic!

I moved down his cheek, and then the bastard moved. He rolled over and nearly squashed me. I took a moment to breathe before pursuing his chunky flared nose. However, I decided on a whim to do his ears first and scurried quickly to his left one. I looked over at the woman and was happy to see that she was still sound asleep and his moving hadn't woken her.

I sat just below his ear lobe and fired up my glands to fill that hole with as much of my thread as I could ram in. Satisfied that it was fully plugged up, I moved quickly to do his other ear. Some of his hair was sitting on the top part of his ear, so I utilized those hair strands and incorporated them into my web. I knew when he woke up that he'd pull his hair out trying to free his ear, and that made me grin. I found another bug and ate it, replenishing my stamina straight away.

Working on adrenalin, I crawled over his cheek and down to his nose. His was a lot hairier and wider than the woman's. It actually grossed me out. I pushed my face into his nostrils one at a time and gauged what I

would do. I'd pulled my head out and was resting on his upper lip when all of a sudden, his mouth opened and he made a hell of a noise while sneezing. Not once, not twice, but three times. I didn't have time to secure myself and I fell back onto his chin at first, then tumbled backwards and ended up on his upper chest. I waited for a few moments before crawling back up.

I didn't realize it, but I was holding my breath as I worked at plugging up his right nostril. I let out a whiffy sound and relaxed when he didn't sneeze again. I carried on until both of his nostrils were corked good and proper.

Admiring my work, I started to tremble when he began breathing loudly from his gaping mouth. I thought, *this is it, he's going to wake up*. When he didn't, I quickly moved to his chin and crawled back up until I was sitting on the edge of his bottom lip. It was like being transported in an elevator. Each time he breathed, his lips lifted me a little. He seemed to be struggling to breathe, unlike the woman. I knew I had to work faster.

I wasted no time thinking about it. I crawled into his open mouth and started to fill it with my web. Using his teeth as anchor points, when it was layered up nice and thick I started to exit his mouth, using his lips for a continuation of what I'd done inside his mouth. It was like building a web on damp tree leaves. His lips were moist, making my webbing swell.

A part of me wanted to cover his entire face. If I'd had the time before they were due to wake, I would have done it. Instead, I kept going until none of his reddish lips could be seen, nor parts of his upper chin. I didn't stop to admire my work this time. I moved quickly to the woman and began filling her mouth.

When I reached her mouth, I had to think about the best way to do it, because her mouth was not as open as his was. I could still fit inside, but I was worried she might close her mouth. But then I remembered she wouldn't, because her nose was plugged up.

I slipped into her mouth and roamed around. Using her back molars, I attached my threads to them from top to bottom. I layered my silk until there was barely a gap between her tongue and the back of her throat, knowing that I had to leave some room for air or they'd wake sooner.

I then crawled out and started to work on her lips. With my web still attached, I sealed it to the top lip first and then the bottom, weaving in and

out with the precision of a doctor reattaching a severed digit. Steady and fast.

Halfway to finishing, the man started to thrash about, but I had to ignore him and finish the job. I'd only managed to get part of the job done when the man's thrashing turned into a full-on panic attack.

I crawled to the top of the woman's nose and looked down at my work. Chuffed and bitterly disappointed that I hadn't been fast enough to have finished with her mouth, I headed to the top of the headboard. I barely made it, as the man's panicked movements nearly squished me. But I made it to the iron frame and had the best view in the house. I could see the man was overreacting and clawing at his mouth, trying desperately to pull my exquisite work apart. That annoyed me.

The woman turned frantically about. I hadn't had the chance to fully finish with her mouth, and she was able to pull my web slightly to one side and allow more air to get in. The man, however, couldn't pull my webbing away, as his lips were tightly secured. His eyes, ears, and nose were jammed with my threads, which further hindered him. I was both fearful and happy. It was the strangest feeling.

I hadn't intended to actually kill either of them. But now that it was happening right in front of me, I couldn't stop it and it thrilled me. All I could remember at that instant was the release I felt. A wave of pain had been lifted from my body and vanished into thin air. My brothers and sisters would finally be avenged.

My eyes travelled to the woman as she started to slap at her face, tearing more of my webbing away. I have to tell you, that was a sad sight, seeing my hard work destroyed in seconds. After she freed her mouth, she started shoving her fingers inside it and pulling strand after strand of my web from it. She'd shake her hand to clear it away and then immediately thrust her fingers back inside her mouth.

It was like watching her try to unclog the bathroom sink after six months of hair had collected down the drain. Wet soggy masses kept being pulled out, thread after thread. She was gagging and making awful sounds.

Then she started grabbing at her eyes and nose. It was as if she didn't know which of them to free first. I was laughing so hard that I almost fell off the headboard. She grabbed handfuls of my luscious web from her left eye, hopelessly trying to yank it away, but only bits of it came free in her moist hand. I didn't know which of them to watch.

My focus returned to the man. I could imagine his wild eyes behind the webbing, pupils dilated, and his heart would be on fire and his brain would be like a cluster bomb exploding within. It made me happier! Then my gaze shifted back to the woman. Though I knew she couldn't actually see, I could imagine her eyes were as terrified as a child facing a lion. She started to scream, and it hurt my sensitive hearing.

I wished at that time that I'd been fast enough to have finished binding her gob. My eyes turned back to the man as he ceased his movements, his struggle growing weaker. I could almost hear him panting. Whereas his chest had been rising vigorously moments earlier, now there was just a slight rise. His life was ebbing away.

The woman wasn't aware of it, not yet, but she would soon see. I noticed that she'd managed to free up her right eye, along with cutting it with her nails in the violent process of tearing my web off. Blood had dribbled down her cheek and collected at the corner of her mouth. It was the most invigorating and glorious sight I'd ever witnessed!

She was pulling my cobwebs away and throwing them to the side like they were dog shit. She looked at her husband and screamed. Freeing the last bit of web from that eye, she got onto her knees and started pulling at the mound of webbing obstructing the man's lips. She worked tirelessly and violently, scratching the sides of his mouth with her sharp nails. She managed to poke a hole through my webbing and used that to spread it open. When that was done, she dug her fingers inside his mouth and started pulling out the threads, shaking her hands free of them each time.

"Tony, you have to help me. Come on babe, pull!" It hadn't dawned on her yet that he'd already died. She managed to free the last bit from inside his mouth, and when she still got no response from him, she freaked out. I don't ever remember seeing a human do what she did. She leaned down, almost covering him, and blew into his mouth, then screamed before going back and blowing into his mouth again. Her hands pressed hard and fast down on his chest while her eyes searched madly for his phone. "Breathe! Breathe! Just fucking breathe!" she wailed.

After twelve minutes had passed, she gave up. Tears saturated her face and she collapsed alongside him. All the howling she'd done was over. She froze like a statue and made not a single noise. The only sound I could hear was the morning birds, which were singing sweet melodies. It was

wonderful to hear them, for they were healing my poor hearing after it had been assaulted by her screaming that way.

I spun a thread and lowered myself to the bed. From there, I crawled across the woman's body until I was in front of her freed eye. I looked intently at her, but she seemed to not notice me. I went closer until my legs brushed across her eyeball. She noticed me then, and she let out the longest and loudest scream of all! It nearly tore me in half. At that moment, I wished the birds could sing louder.

I was so terrified that I fell backward and landed in her lap. Then she sprung up from the bed and started jumping up and down and slapping at her body, trying to get me off. Her movements tossed me nearly halfway across the room, and I landed upside down with the wind knocked out of me. It took me a second to right myself and gauge where I was. I was close to the dresser. I quickly ran under it and hid behind a back leg.

"I'll get you for what you've done! I'll find you, and I will kill you!" she yelled, looking up at the ceiling. I followed her eyes and noticed she was fixated on a tiny black spot, which she presumed was me. I laughed while I watched her some more.

Suddenly, the door opened and both kids entered, wondering what all the screaming was about. The woman broke down when she saw them. Falling to her knees, she sobbed. They kept asking her what was wrong, but she was incoherent and unable to answer them. She just kept yelling, "He's dead, he's dead!" The kids couldn't understand what she was saying.

I poked my head further out from behind the dresser leg to get a better look. I watched as the kids hugged their dead father. When he didn't respond to their touch, they broke down and cried over his body.

I felt sad for them, but I also felt angry that this was what they had done to *my* family. I felt no remorse for what I'd done, and I resolved to return later to finish her off as well.

BEYOND

I moved in next door when she had the house fumigated, and I waited six long months before I returned.

She was using the living room as her sleeping place. I could have taken her out on the couch while she slept, but I wanted her to think I was gone.

After three more months, she returned to the bedroom. I waited another week before I ended her. The long wait somehow made my kill more meaningful, at least to me.

I'd held back long enough, and it was time for her to die. I angrily blocked every hole on her face and then weaved my magnificent web across her mouth, sealing it shut forever.

I watched her die. Asphyxiation was my new weapon.

I moved back in next door. After having already spent six months there, I'd gotten to know the occupants and their hatred for my kind.

Witnessing them kill one of my sisters sealed the deal. They had to die. I continued to move about, going from house to house.

In the year since we started, we've grown to ten thousand strong, and we're still growing. I'm free now, and my brothers and sisters are free.

No longer would a human harm us without retribution. No longer were we insignificant enough to be stomped on, sprayed, drowned, or picked apart.

We took back what was our right – the right to live!

The End

Other books by Ellie Douglas

Hounded

Hounded 2

The Dead Undone

The Dead Wake Horror Collection Vol 1

Death O Death Horror Collection Vol 2

Fear Inducer

Leech

Bury 'Em Deep

The Trapper

About the Author

Ellie Douglas is an author who currently resides in New Zealand with her husband and four children. As a child, Enid Blyton and Stephen King inspired her love of writing and reading. When she is not writing, she can be found designing one-of-a-kind pre-made book covers. Her passion for creative art led her to become a talented and sought-after freelance cover artist. In her free time, she enjoys the cinema, spending time with her children, music, and dancing, and anything and everything to do with Horror—especially zombies.

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